

2026
MICHIGAN MADE
YOUTH FLAG FOOTBALL
Rules of Gameplay / Logistics

I. Divisions & Game Format

- The 6U, 8U, 10U, 12U, 14U and High School age Divisions will be played 6v6. **Division is determined by the player's age on the 1st scheduled day of league games.** Players may play up in age division. However, a player may never play down in division. (ex: your 11-year-old may play 12U or even 14U but may never play 10U).
- At the start of each game, captains from both teams shall meet at mid-field for rock / paper / scissors to determine possession and which side of field to play.
- The winner of rock paper scissors has the choice of offense or defense. The loser has the choice of direction. Teams may not choose to defer to the second half.
- The offensive team takes possession of the ball at its 5-yard line and has three (3) plays to achieve first downs (mid-field). With an additional three more downs to score a touchdown after a first down is achieved.
- If the offense fails to score, the ball changes possession and the new offensive team starts its drive on its own 5-yard line.
- **All possession changes start at the offenses 5-yard line except for interceptions on regular downs.**
- Fumbles result in a dead ball and ball is spotted at place the ball left the carriers possession.
- After halftime, possession changes to the team that started the game on defense.
- Field dimensions are 50 yards in length by 25 yards in width. End zones will have 10 yards of depth.
- Pylons identify the goal lines. Fields will be lined.

II. Timing

- Games are played in **two 20-minute halves** on a continuous clock, with a 2-minute halftime.
- **Each team has 2 timeouts per game.** The game clock stops only for timeouts or injury. Timeouts are one minute long.
- Each time the ball is spotted, the offense has a **30-second play clock** to snap the ball.
- Teams will receive one warning before a delay-of-game penalty is enforced as a loss of down.
- Officials can stop the clock anytime at their discretion.

III. Rosters

- Teams must consist of at least 6 players and start a game with the designated number of players. ** In the event of an injury or shortage, teams with insufficient substitute players may play as low as a 4v4 game, but no fewer than that. This would be at coach's discretion.*

IV. Equipment

- The league provides each player with a flag belt prior to the season. These are for the athlete to keep and parents will be responsible for keeping, cleaning and bringing them each game/practice throughout the season. They will also receive a team performance t-shirt and shorts which must be worn.
- Teams will be provided a football by the league and can use that football on game days, or coaches may provide their own. Requirements: 6/8U=Pee Wee. 10/12U=Junior. 14U=Youth.
- Players must wear athletic shoes - cleats are recommended.
- Players may tape their forearms, hands and fingers. Players may wear mouthpieces, gloves, elbow pads, kneepads or any other desired athletic accessories, but please note that these items are not provided.
- Players must remove all watches, earrings and any other jewelry that the officials deem hazardous.
- Players' jerseys must be tucked under the flag belts. No shirt or apparel can impede flag-grabs during competition. If a player possesses the ball with illegally positioned flags, they will be downed at the spot.

V. Scoring

- Touchdown = 6 points
- PAT (Point after Touchdown) = +1 point (5-yard line) or +2 points (10-Yard line).
- A team that scores a touchdown must declare whether it wishes to attempt a 1-pt. conversion or a 2-pt. conversion. 1-pt. conversions are not eligible to be run plays.
- Interceptions can be returned for a Touchdown unless the player's flag that intercepts the ball is pulled. The ball will be spotted at the point of the pulled flag.
- Interceptions on PAT's cannot be returned.
- There are no safeties. If the ball carrier is downed in their own endzone, the ball will be placed on the goal line for the next down of play.

VI. Coaches/Substitutions

- Coaches are typically volunteer parents or family members helping the players learn and enjoy the game. There is a max of three on-field coaches per team.
- Parents are encouraged to support the coach at all time.
- One offensive coach is allowed on the field behind the formation in the backfield to coach and direct players according to need and age division. Offensive coach must make sure that all participating players flags are legally placed before each play.
- Defensive coaches must move to the sidelines each play before the snap of the ball.
- In the 6U division only, one defensive coach may remain on the field to help players align/tell them which way to go, but may not impede on-field play in any way.

VII. Live/Dead Ball

- The ball is live at the snap of the ball and remains live until the official whistles the ball dead.
- The official will indicate the neutral zone (1 yard off the ball defensively) and line of scrimmage.

- Coaches may make substitutions on any dead ball.
- Any official can whistle the play dead.
- Play is ruled “dead” immediately when: the ball hits the ground, is fumbled, the ball carrier’s flag is pulled, the ball carrier steps out of bounds, there is a touchdown, PAT or safety scored, the ball carrier’s knee, shin, elbow or forearm hits the ground, the ball carrier’s flag falls out, a player catches/possesses the ball while wearing only one flag, no flags or illegally placed flags.

VIII. Running Game

- A player must completely let go of the ball to be considered a legal handoff.
- There is no limit to the number of runs that can be performed by the offense in a game, however there are NO RUNS allowed once the offense is within 5 yards of achieving a first down or when the offense is within 5 yards of achieving a touchdown.
- There is also no limit to the number of handoffs in a single play.
- Multiple direct handoffs and tosses, player-to-player behind the line of scrimmage, are legal so long as the ball never crosses the line of scrimmage. Anyone behind the line of scrimmage can receive a handoff or toss including the QB after there has been an exchange. *There are no laterals allowed once the ball has advanced beyond the line of scrimmage.*
- **The QB will be allotted 2 runs per game.**
- The only other time that the QB also has the ability to advance the ball beyond the line of scrimmage is when the defense uses one of its two allotted blitzes per game.
- The quarterback is defined as the first offensive player that receives the snap from the center. (Direct snaps to a RB would have him considered a QB and count as a QB run)
- If the QB exceeds the 2 runs team will have a loss of downs and ball be returned to the line of scrimmage.
- No Blocking is allowed at any time. Blocking will result in a loss of down and the ball being downed at the spot.
- A player who takes a handoff can throw the ball, if he or she does not pass the line of scrimmage first.
- It is the responsibility of the ball carrier to avoid colliding with defenders that lie in his/her path.
- Unintentional contact will not be penalized, provided the ball carrier tries to avoid it.
- Failure to attempt to avoid contact with a defender (charging) may be penalized. Intentional contact will not be tolerated, and will result in removal from the game for one play, a 5-yard penalty and a loss of down. Repeat offenses by a team or player may also result in ejection.
- The ball is spotted where the runner’s flag belt is when the flag is pulled, not where the ball carrier hold or extends the ball.
- It is always the offensive team’s responsibility to retrieve and return the ball to the official each play. Delay in getting the ball to the official could result in a delay of game penalty and loss of down. The play clock will start after play is whistled dead.
- Jumping or diving to advance the ball is illegal and the ball carrier will be downed at the spot. However, jumping or diving to catch a pass is permitted.

- Any flag guarding or stiff arming is illegal whether intentional or not, and the ball carrier will be downed at the spot of the infraction.
- Flag guarding is an attempt by the ball carrier to obstruct the defender's access to the flags by stiff arming, dropping the head, hand, arm or shoulder, or intentionally covering the flags.

IX. Receiving

- All players are eligible to receive passes including the center.
- The quarterback can receive a pass as well, if the ball has been handed off behind the line of scrimmage.
- A player who gains possession in the air is considered in bounds as long as one foot comes down in the field of play. In the case of simultaneous possession by both an offensive and defensive player, possession is awarded to the offense.
- Jumping or diving to advance the ball is illegal and the ball carrier will be downed at the spot. However, jumping or diving to catch a pass is permitted.

X. Passing

- All passes must be from behind the line of scrimmage, thrown forward and received beyond the line of scrimmage.
- Shovel passes are allowed, but must be received in front of the QB otherwise it is considered a run. Pitches, tosses, laterals are only allowed behind the line of scrimmage.
- The Quarterback has 5 seconds to pass the ball before the play is blown dead by the official with a loss of down. The ball is marked at the previous spot.
- Interceptions change the possession of the ball and are returnable except on PAT's.

XI. Defense

- Defensive players may NOT defend on the line of scrimmage – they must align no closer than **1 yard** from the line of scrimmage.
- Only 2 blitzes are allowed per team, per game and all players who rush/blitz the passer must be a minimum of **5 yards** from the line of scrimmage when the ball is snapped.
- Any number of players can blitz the quarterback. A referee will identify the blitz line by dropping a colored bean bag.
- Defensive players should verify they are in the correct position with the official's beanbag before rushing.
- Once the ball is handed off, the 5-yard rule is no longer in effect and all defenders may go behind the line of scrimmage to pull the flags of the ball carrier.
- If a defense attempts to blitz, but the ball is handed off before the defender crosses the line of scrimmage, it will not be considered a blitz.
- **A penalty may be called if:**
 - o If the rusher leaves the rush line before the snap and crosses the line of scrimmage before a handoff or pass it is deemed an illegal rush. The down will be replayed.
 - o Any defensive player not lined up at the rush line that crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is passed or handed off is deemed an illegal rush. The down will be replayed.

- Any defensive player crosses the line of scrimmage before the ball is snapped is Offsides. The down will be replayed.

XII. Flag Pulling

- A legal flag pull takes place when the ball carrier is in full possession of the ball. **The ball carrier is down where the flag belt is pulled, NOT where the ball is extended.**
- Defenders can dive to pull flags, but cannot tackle, hold on to, or run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.
- If a player's flag inadvertently falls off during the play, the player is down immediately upon possession of the ball and the play ends.
- A defensive player may not intentionally pull the flags off of a player who is not in possession of the ball.
- Failure to attempt to avoid contact with a runner (tackling or wrapping up) may be penalized. Intentional excessive contact will not be tolerated, and will result in removal from the game for one play. Repeat offenses by a team or player may also result in ejection.

XIII. Formations

- Offense must have a minimum of one player on the line of scrimmage (center). The quarterback must be off the line of scrimmage.
- The ball must be snapped between the center's legs. Shotgun snaps are allowed.
- Only one receiver or back is allowed in motion at a time. All motion must be parallel to the line of scrimmage and no motion is permitted toward the line of scrimmage. The lone player in motion can remain in motion and does not need to be set at the snap of the ball.
- Offensive players must come to a complete stop for one second on multiple-player shifts before the ball is snapped.
- Movement by a player who is set or a player who runs toward the line of scrimmage while in motion is considered a false start and a loss of down.
- The center must snap the ball with a rapid and continuous motion between his/her legs to a player in the backfield, and the ball must completely leave his/her hands.

XIV. Overtime Period

- If the score is tied at the end of regulation the game will go into overtime.
- This will be played in a **"BEST PLAY"** wins the game format with one overtime period consisting of one play for each team. Each team will get one play with the ball from the **goal line**, and can run or pass. The spot where the flag is pulled is where a cone will be dropped to mark the spot. The team whose play achieves the most yardage will be awarded 1 point and a win. **If there is pass interference, it is a spot foul, with the offense still allowed one more play attempt.** Offensive penalties result in loss of down.
- The first Offensive/Defensive possession is determined by the winner of rock/paper/scissors and the ball will begin at the offenses **goal line**. In each subsequent overtime, the team starting with the ball will alternate. There are no offensive safeties.
- Overtime periods continue until the tie is broken with the best play/most yards winning.
- All timeouts, blitzes and QB runs remaining DO carry over into overtime. They do not reset.

XV. Weather (Delays and Cancellations)

- If there is thunder or lightning present, a 30-minute delay will be placed on games being played.
- If the inclement weather is persistent, games will be cancelled without reschedule. If two games are missed due to weather challenges, going forward any further weather cancellations will be rescheduled.
- League commissioner and staff will make final judgement calls on weather and weather predictions with the safety of all coaches, players, officials and volunteers as the top priority.

XVI. Unsportsmanlike Conduct

- If the fields monitor or referee witnesses any acts of intentional tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, blocking, fighting, foul language or play, or any unsportsmanlike act, the game will be stopped and the player/coach/spectator will be ejected from the game.
- The decision is made at the referee's discretion. No appeals will be considered. POOR SPORTSMANSHIP WILL NOT BE TOLERATED!
- Offensive or confrontational language is not be tolerated from players, staff or spectating parents. Officials have the right to determine offensive language. If offensive or confrontational language occurs, the referee will give one warning. If it continues, the warned person(s) will be ejected. Keep comments profanity free.
- Ball carriers MUST make an effort to avoid defenders with an established position.
- Defenders are not allowed to run through the ball carrier when pulling flags.
- No intentional contact of any kind will be tolerated!
- Keep younger kids and personal items off the field in the end zone area. Parents should never enter the playing area for any reason other than an injury to their student-athlete. Impermissibly entering the playing field will result in removal from the event. This is for the safety of all players, coaches and staff.
- Leave the playing area in a timely manner following competition.
- Repeat offenses by players, or spectators not following league protocols may result in removal from the league. Refunds will not be issued.

XVII. Player, Coach and Spectator Code of Ethics

- I will remember that this is a preparatory league and place the emotional and physical well-being of the players ahead of a personal desire to win.
- I will treat each player as an individual, remembering the large range of emotional and physical development.
- I will take reasonable measures to honor all commitments to the athletes and coaches.
- I will do my best to provide a safe playing situation for the players.
- I will lead by example demonstrating fair play and sportsmanship with all players, coaches, officials, parents and staff.
- Coaches will do their best to organize practices and game plans that are fun and develop ALL players.

- I will provide a sports environment that is free of drugs, tobacco and alcohol, and I will refrain from their use at all youth sports events.
- Coaches will be knowledgeable in the rules and teach these rules to the players.
- I will remember that this is youth sports, and that the game is for children and not for adults.
- Unsportsman-like play, behavior or language from coaches, parents, officials or players will NOT be tolerated and can result in disqualification from the contest and/or removal from the remainder of Flag Football League games without pay or refund. **This can be Trash talking, roughing, tackling, elbowing, cheap shots, or other flagrant acts. It also includes and extends beyond negative behavior or language that is directed at coaches, officials, score keepers, parents or Michigan Made staff.**

XVIII. Penalties

- All penalties will be called by the referee. Penalties may be declined by the non-penalized team. Defensive pass interference and coaching interference are the only penalties that award yardage to the opposing team. No other infraction results in change/loss of yardage.

DEFENSE:

Infraction

- Offsides or Illegal Blitz – replay the down
- Pass Interference – first down awarded, spot foul
- Coach On-Field Interference – first down awarded, spot foul
- Defensive Holding – 5-yard penalty from result of the play
- Illegal Flag Pull (holding/tackling the ball carrier) – 5-yard penalty from result of the play
- Unsportsmanlike Conduct – Removal/Ejection at Official’s discretion, 15-yard penalty from the previous spot.

OFFENSE:

Infraction

- Stiff Arming/Flag Guarding – ball carrier is ruled down
- Offensive Holding, Blocking – ball carrier is ruled down
- Charging – removal for 1 play, ball carrier is ruled down
- Illegal Motion/false start – loss of down
- Illegal Forward Pass – loss of down
- Offensive Pass Interference – loss of down
- Delay of Game – loss of down
- Unsportsmanlike Conduct – Removal/Ejection at Official’s discretion, 15-yard penalty from the previous spot.

- Referees determine incidental contact that may result from normal run of play. All penalties will be assessed from the line of scrimmage unless stated otherwise.
- Only the team coach may ask the referee questions about rule clarification and interpretations. Players cannot question judgement calls.
- Games cannot end on a defensive penalty unless the offense declines it.

XIX. Game Field Layout

50 Yards Long x 25 Yards Wide

Mid-Field = 1st Down

“NO RUN ZONES” – 5 Yards Before Offense’s Mid-Field / 5 Yards Before Offense’s End-zone

Ball Starts on 5 Yard Line

